

Mining for Information Gold: How to get at it?

AAS Shashi Panel

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Izumi Koide

Resource Center for the History of Entrepreneurship

Shibusawa Memorial Museum

Dear Everyone, it is my honor to join this panel and introduce you what we at Shibusawa Museum's Resource Center are working on.

First of all, let me briefly mention about Eiichi Shibusawa, the builder of Japanese economy and society in Meiji Japan. He was the first banker in Japan, created the first *kabushiki kaisha*, stock company. He helped more than five hundred companies many of which have grown to big corporations; he founded economic organizations such as Chamber of Commerce, Bankers Association, etc. Besides his accomplishments in the field of economy, he was very active in such field as social welfare, education, international relations, and he received many distinguished guests at his residence including Ulysses Grant, 18<sup>th</sup> American President, Chiang Kai-Shek, and Indian poet Tagore.

After Eiichi Shibusawa passed away, his grandson and heir, Keizo Shibusawa had in 1937 an idea of a museum of Japanese business history, Nihon Jitsugyoshi Hakubutsukan, in order to commemorate Eiichi Shibusawa and his achievements. His proposal was accepted by the Ryumonsha, former organization of Shibusawa Foundation, and acquisitions for the museum collection began. Although the construction of the museum building was about to start in 1939, it had to be postponed because of the War. When the War was over, the collection was survived without any place to house. Keizo Shibusawa was the Minister of Finance who ordered *zaibatsu* dissolution, and he was quickly processed his property according to the policy. The *jitsugyoshi* collection was entrusted to and later donated to which is now the Department of Archival Studies, National Institute of Japanese Literature, 国文学研究資料館.

Besides working in banks and government, Keizo Shibusawa was a father of folklore studies in Japan, and he built and/or helped to build several collections, one of which has formed a core collection for National Museum of Ethnology, or Minpaku, in Osaka. Keizo proposed the museum commemorating his grandfather Eiichi in order to place him in the historical context to better understand his activities and at the same time looking at people of his contemporary.

A student of folklore and anthropology, Keizo had built collections for research, applied classifications to these collections, and made indexes; hence he created information resources for research. He himself was not only a student but also served as patron of research, and built networks of researchers. Following Keizo's path, the Resource Center aims to create resources for research on history of Japanese business.

Different from macro economic studies, company histories include people's activities, efforts and trajectory, as well as economic data of the company. Currently our Center operates two projects on company history: one is *shashi* index, and the other is to compile a directory for business archives.

As you have heard today, *shashi* provides rich and unique contents on the company. It includes stories and observations on inner workings. The descriptions vary from human experiences to business conditions. Information is given in time series. The relationship of the company with people, not only consumers of the company products but in wider society are often described.

*Shashi* is characterized by in-house publication. Readers aimed at are usually employees and people relating to the company; editorial responsibility often rests on editorial board in the company; publisher is almost always the company itself. Therefore, *shashi* is a publication edited by non-specialized editor and published by non-professional publisher.

These points are nuisances for the librarian. It is grey literature, namely, less known publication hard to locate, with limited, private channel of distribution. Another big problem which worsens this is inconsistent bibliographic information provided in *shashi*. You can see a couple of examples here.

This is a shipbuilding company, Hitachi Zosen's company history. As you see in the

title page, it says インテグレーター 日立造船 90周年を迎えて and in the colophon, or *okuzuke*, it says 日立造船 90周年を迎えて, while on the cover it says HITACHI ZOSEN in Romaji and 日立造船 90周年を迎えて.

Another example is for Kanematsu Gosho, a trading company. In the title page it says 1889-1969 兼松江商 80周年記念 K G 物語 and in the colophon it says 創業 80周年記念 K G 物語 and on the cover it says 1889-1969 K G 物語 兼松江商 80周年記念.

Furthermore, there is often discrepancy in title and scope. For example, a hundred and twenty year history may only cover the last 20 years, because a hundred-year history is already written. You cannot judge by title if it is either accumulation or succeeding volume of the already published history.

If we want to use company histories as resource for research, we need some authority files. They may be to standardize bibliographic information for *shashi*, including publishing information, and sufficient notes.

Another file of data which would help to use company history may be for company names. Companies often change its name, and repeats merger, consolidation, or close-down. There is diagram of genealogy of company but no index to old names. We plan to create a database of old company names. Slide 13 is a sample sheet we are working on. It is still in an experimental, planning stage, but eventually will be developed into a database, which, I suppose, can be also used for other, wider purposes as well.

Because the amount of work of information processing is huge, we plan to utilize existing information rather than creating index terms newly. Our policy leans toward less modification of data itself, with necessary supplementary information.

Currently we plan to walk into *shashi* index world from four doors. The first door is table of contents. This is a sample of table of contents, which itemizes the contents in more detail compared to other cases.

The second door is chronology which most *shashi* includes. Chronology gives dates and/or years for the company and relating events. If chronology is searchable, it can

serve not only for company history database, but as information source for history of modern Japanese society in large.

The third door is appendix which lists various materials such as articles of the company, confining laws, change in capitals, products, business results, and more. Slide 20 is an example of appendix. You can see what kind of information is included in appendix.

The fourth door is index provided at the end of the book. Here is a sample of such pages.

There are problems, however, which we have not find answers yet. If there is no index already provided, should we make one? Cost of inputting data would reach very high; we estimate average number of hours for inputting per volume may be 30 to 50 hours even if employing an OCR software. Designing database would be costly, and keep providing access may not be easy.

Tentative schedule would be: in 2005, model database of 100-200 companies will be processed; in 2006, public access will be experimented while more company histories are processed; in 2007, company name index will be provided and more company histories would keep being added.

Who are in team for this ambitious project? Our leader is Ms. Katsuko Murahashi, former librarian of Keidanren; other members are: Mr. Haruhito Takeda, professor of University of Tokyo; Mr. Masao Ishizaka of Nittsu Research Institute and Consulting; Mr. Katsuyuki Yokoyama, President of Yushodo Microfilm Publishing. They are all fascinated with the idea of *shashi* index, and working hard to materialize our dream in the form of *shashi* index. I suppose it will take at least three years to see the first substantial *shashi* index database working. We'd appreciate if you could support this project in any way you can think of.

Thank you for listening to my presentation today.